# Forward-looking review of the CPWF : Terms of Reference

## Background

The Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) has been a 10-year investment by the CGIAR aimed at raising water productivity and improving food security while helping alleviate poverty, improve health, and attain environmental security.

These are all issues that sit at the complex interface of water and food research, practice and policies. The CPWF sought to address these issues through a new quality of partnerships among International Centers, advanced research institutes (ARIs), national research and extension systems (NARES), the NGO community and other partners, and through a cross-scale Integrated Natural Resources Management approach that links field and farming systems to catchments, basins, and regional and international scales ([CPWF 2002](#_ENREF_1)).

A further aim of CPWF was to inform the wider CGIAR on ways to deploy research so that it is more likely to contribute to favourable development outcomes. It is anticipated that a forward looking review of the CPWF should identify its contributions and highlight what would be appropriate to take forward in substance and process terms under WLE (or other CRPs).

On the principal issues of water scarcity and water productivity, the CPWF concluded during the course of its work program that the planet does, in fact, have enough fresh water to meet the full range of needs for people and ecosystems for the foreseeable future, but that social and environmental equity will only be achieved through careful and creative management of water resources - how and by whom water is managed ([Fisher and Cook 2012](#_ENREF_2)). It was at this point that the CPWF expanded its relatively narrow focus on water productivity to more directly address water-related development challenges.

The program has generated evidence that suggests that its research and associated activities have led to tangible outcomes that impinge on water management and food security. In addition, in its second phase the CPWF has developed a series of institutional innovations in the way it conducts its research. These innovations focused on framing its research with an analysis of impact pathways and a proactive engagement through dialogue and partnership with key stakeholders and change agents in these pathways. CPWF refers to this as a [research for development (R4D) approach](http://waterandfood.org/2013/08/29/ten-years-later-what-lessons-does-cpwf-have-for-the-r4d-community/). The program has generated evidence that suggests that R4D has allowed it to achieve tangible outcomes that would not otherwise have resulted from conventionally framed research.

## Review objectives

The focus of this review is three fold (with some adjustments in terminology, these broadly follow OECD DAC development evaluation criteria[[1]](#footnote-1)).

1. To provide an independent assessment of CPWF research **outputs** (research products), related **outcomes** (changes in decision-maker policy or practice influenced by outputs), the **sustainability** of these outcomes after program closure, and nascent **impacts** (consequences of outcomes/ decisions for livelihoods, food security and other development objectives) along with the **relevance**, scale, and targeting (men/women/different groups) of the program.
2. To explore the **effectiveness** of the program at basin and cross-basin levels and particularly of the R4D approach in achieving these outputs and outcomes and drawing lessons for future program design and more generally for the use of agricultural research in complex development domains.
3. To explore and **draw lessons** about the effectiveness of the Challenge Program model and highlight what would be appropriate to take forward in substance and process terms under WLE (or other CRPs) as the CGIAR reform process unfolds. Particular attention should be placed on the effectiveness of the coordination elements of the program in each of the basins as well as across the basins.

## Suggested review guiding questions

One way to structure the guiding questions for the review is through what has been termed “Outcome Harvesting”[[2]](#footnote-2). Outcome Harvesting is like forensic science in that it applies a broad spectrum of techniques to yield evidence-based answers to the following questions:

* What happened?
* Who did it (or contributed to it)?
* How do we know this? Is there corroborating evidence?
* Why is this important? What do we do with what we found out?

Answers to these questions combined with the focus on relevance, sustainability, effectiveness and influence provide important information about the contributions made by a specific programme toward a given outcome or outcomes.

Each question should look at what has been done, where the evidence lies and, as a result, what can be learnt (and who the learning is for). The questions are linked and will require a process of collective analysis and validation towards the end of the review process.

### Assessing outputs

Assess CPWF research outputs as a whole with regard to:

* Credibility (scientific quality),
* Relevance (to CPWF program objectives or basin development challenges),
* Coverage (presence or absence of major gaps given objectives),
* Coherence (complementarity, mutually reinforcing),
* Accessibility (publications, manuals and tools, policy briefs, summaries of research outputs and outcomes for different audiences, use of social media).

### Assessing outcomes and the output – outcome links

Within an R4D approach, the CPWF claims to use engagement processes (platforms, fora, dialogues, negotiation, partnerships, links with decision-makers) to translate outputs to outcomes (desired changes in policy or practice):

* Have CPWF research outputs been used in or central to engagement processes?
* Have CPWF engagement processes resulted in desired outcomes?
* Are these outcomes likely to be sustainable?
* How effective has the CPWF been in translating outputs to outcomes?
* Has the R4D approach been more effective than alternative approaches in developing outputs and translating them to outcomes?

### Lessons

* What are the key lessons from the CPWF in the use of agricultural research in complex development domains?
* What lessons does the CPWF experience in R4D provide to the CGIAR system?
* What CPWF lessons should be taken forward in substance and process terms under WLE or other CRPs?
* How should CPWF lessons be best utilized?

## Process

A small team of complementary experts to undertake the review over a period of four months, capitalizing on the final months of CPWF operations (and research team configuration) and in early 2014 undertaking analysis and drawing conclusions for dissemination.

## Methodology

The review process will require a participative, flexible and iterative approach with a readiness from the review team to regularly communicate with each other and with CPWF, ensuring a learning and reflective process.

The review team will need to consider all six CPWF basin programs though they may wish to focus on specific aspects within a basin in order to highlight some issues.

Review to combine:

* Desk review of CPWF key reports (much already collated through process of the metasynthesis book, basin final messages, institutional histories, and others),
* Interviews with CPWF key actors – both those contracted to the program and those affected by R4D,
* Attendance at significant CPWF events, particularly final basin-level stakeholder meetings, and
* An inclusive validation process, including explicit use of feedback loops and reflection between the review team and the CPWF community.

## Tentative Calendar

* Kick-off meeting with part of CPWF Management Team (2 days) : Paris 11-12 Nov
* Attending 2 key basin closing events (not necessarily the whole team)
  + Nile stakeholders final workshop in Addis 14-15 Nov
  + [Mekong Forum](http://mekong.waterandfood.org/archives/3186) in Hanoi 19-21 Nov
* Late January – early February, in a 3rd basin (Limpopo, tbc), field visit and meeting with all 6 Basin Leaders to interact on intermediate conclusions of the review

## Key independent expertise required

1. **Team leader:** An evaluation and impact assessment specialist with specific experience in the evaluation of international agricultural research and capacity building programs.
2. **Water and food specialist:** A researcher or practitioner with specific experience of the range of research, practice and policy issues at the water and food interface.
3. **A R4D specialist:** A researcher or practitioner with specific expertise in the design and implementation of research programs that seek to use research for developmental purposes. Familiarity with the CGIAR and issues related to institutional learning and change.

Team members will be identified from a long list suggested by key program members, former CPWF Board members, based on their skills, independence (non involvement in CPWF projects), and profiles’ complementarity.

To guarantee the review’s independence, the oversight of the review will be given to the two independent IWMI Board members previously on the CPWF Board, namely George Rothschild and Barbara Schreiner.

## Reference list (to share with Review team) or Bibliography

CPWF. 2002. Full Proposal: Submitted to the CGIAR by the Challenge Programme on Water and Food Consortium. Colombo: International Water Management Institute.

Fisher, M., and S. Cook. 2012. *Water, Food and Poverty in River Basins: Defining the Limits*. Routledge.

1. See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ricardo Wilson-Grau Heather Britt, Outcome Harvesting, May 2012, Ford Foundation.

   “Unlike some evaluation methods, Outcome Harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes or objectives, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change. Information is collected, or harvested, from the individual or organization whose actions influenced the outcome(s) to answer specific, useable questions. The harvested information goes through a winnowing process during which it is validated or substantiated by comparing it to information collected from knowledgeable, independent sources. The substantiated information is then analyzed and interpreted at the level of individual outcomes or groups of outcomes that contribute to mission, goals or strategies and the resultant outcome descriptions are used to answer the questions that were initially posed.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)